A Vocabulary for Young Fathers

Frank
from
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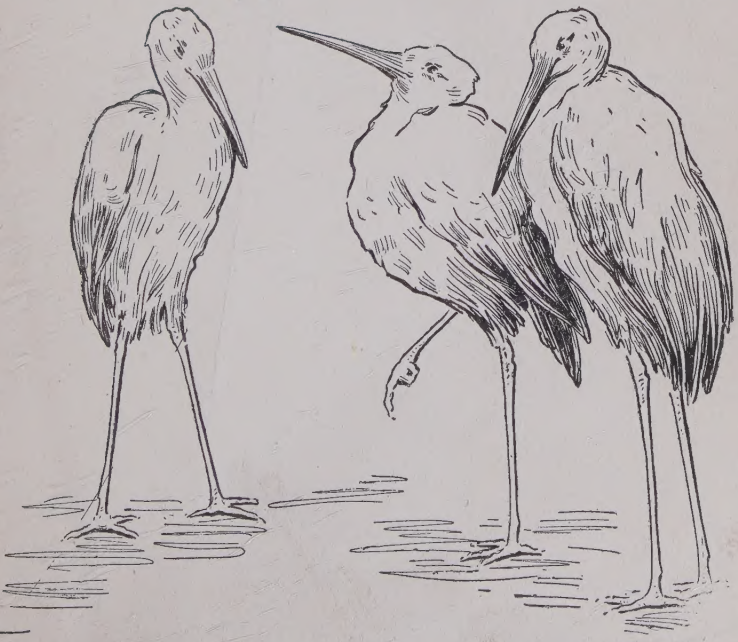

Christmas 1908.

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A VOCABULARY FOR YOUNG FATHERS

"Pi-lee!"

A VOCABULARY

FOR

YOUNG FATHERS

BY

O. N. E.

[Compounded and compiled after the most careful researches into the psychology governing the telepathic interpretation of infantile intelligence.]

Illustrations from life by

ESTHER P. HILL

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[VOCABULARY 6]

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IT has often occurred to me, and I dare say it has occurred to many other young fathers, that in this age of the making of many books the most crying need has been strangely overlooked.

Where in the lengthy lists of "Books of the Hour", can one find a guide for the illumination of the understanding of mere man as to the meaning of the uncouth and cryptic utterances of his infant offspring?

Mothers have no need of this

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assistance. Nature seems to have provided them—and indeed, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females, as well—with an instructive bibliography on this subject, by which they interpret fearlessly and instantaneously the gummy outpourings of infantile intelligence.

Feeling that light on this recondite subject will be widely appreciated and that its popularity will at once place it at the head of the "Six Best Sellers," the author has undertaken to compile a number of the simpler and more common phrases and their meanings; and cheerfully dedicates this effort to the inexperienced of his kind.

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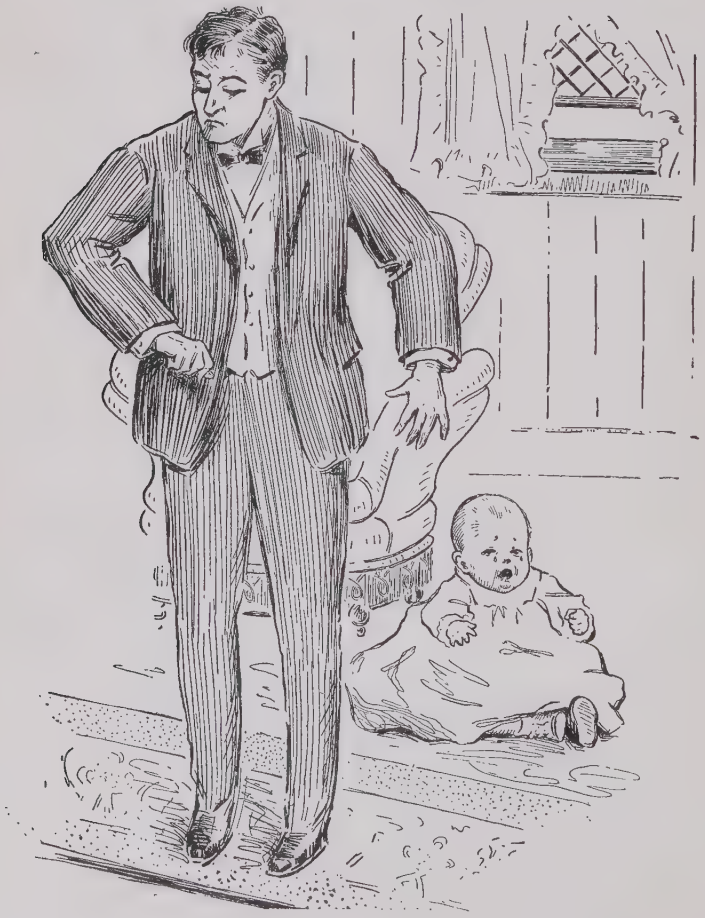

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GOO. This is usually the first word attempted and the meaning depends largely upon the inflection, the time uttered and the persons present. (a) If delivered with a smile and a gurgling accent after eating, is an expression of *content*. (b) Attended by persistent closing of eyelids denotes a desire for *slumber*. (c) If accent seems dry and throaty, with note of impatience, denotes *hunger*. (Fathers who are left in charge should note the inflection carefully, as an upward choking inflection, accompanied by a strained look about the eyes, invariably indicates a desire to relieve an overcharged meal ticket. Inattention to this shade of meaning

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results in the purchase of a new suit.)

Must not be confounded with

AH-GOO, which is strictly a word of *greeting* and bestowed exclusively on mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females.

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MA-MA. This is also one of the first words used and is considered a sign of most remarkable intelligence. (a) Usually a term of *endearment*, applied to mother, grandmother, aunt, nurse or other females. (b) Sometimes indicates contentment, pleasure, hunger or physical discomfort.

Must not be confounded with

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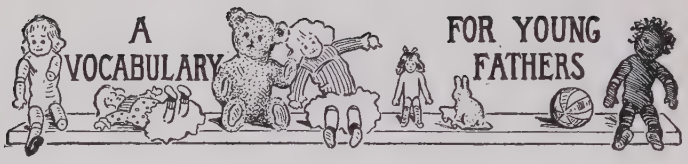
DA-DA, which is confined to a *form of greeting* to father, to dogs or to the nursing bottle.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BOO. Girl babies usually add this word early to their vocabulary. (a) It means *boy*. (b) When uttered by a boy baby is interpreted as "bow-wow," or *dog*. Used by both sexes to ask for *bread*, *nursing bottle* or *baby buggy*, to express *appreciation of the beautiful* and to indicate the *presence of a pain*. (c) It is also interpreted, when uttered with a playful inflection, to mean a desire to engage in *game with father;* as alternately raising and lowering newspaper and repeating the word with sportive or pretended force. (d) This word also means *book* if the child's eyes or hands rest in the near or even remote vicinity of a volume.

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BY-BY. This phrase is one of the most widely comprehensive in the whole infant vocabulary. Its meaning depends entirely upon surrounding circumstances. (a) It sometimes means a *desire to walk*, to *ride*, to accompany a visitor home, to *don* a cap and coat, to *go to sleep*, or to *drag* a small *cart* by a string. Even mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females sometimes find difficulty in determining the meaning of this utterance. (b) Accompanied by waving of hands means "farewell." (c) Sometimes the whole range of definitions is tried without satisfying the infant, thus proving that

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this term is not yet clearly understood in its entirety.

BAY-BAY. *Baby, Biscuit.* Where the child is allowed to suck a strip of bacon attached to cord around its neck, indicates a desire for the tid-bit.

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NAN-NAN. May mean *grandmother*, *aunt*, *nurse* or any female except mother.

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WAW-WAW. *Water.* Usually a nocturnal expression, seeming to be especially suited to the hours of three to five A. M. This night-thirst is one of the most mysterious demands of complex nature and has been the subject of much discussion, the concensus of opinion among fathers — many of them eminent scientific authorities — regarding it as a mere habit, while mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females invariably insist that it is a firmly-fixed principle of child nature, which it would be cruel to eradicate by disciplinary methods. It may be well to note that it is advisable, when complying with request for drink, to maintain strict

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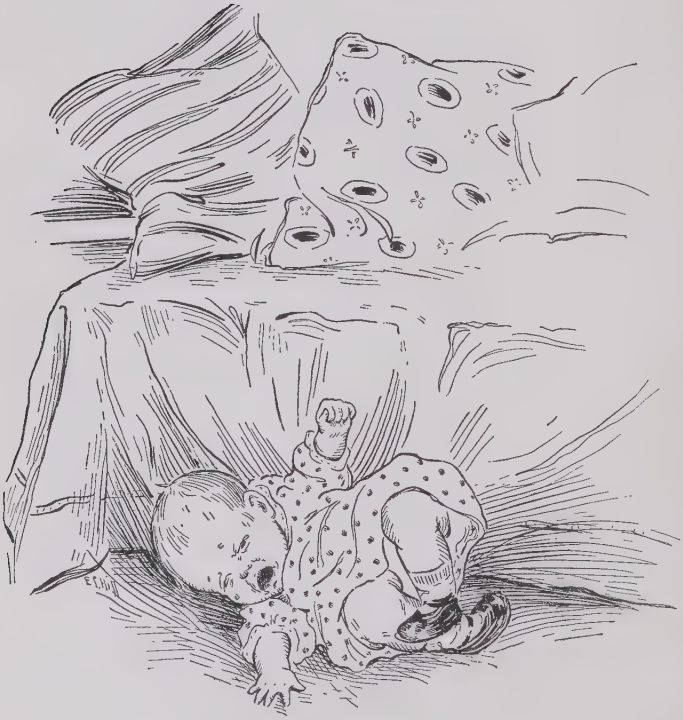

watch on cup and contents, as a few drops on infant's person at this time results, with startling quickness, in a croupy cough.

Often confounded with

WAW, which is a convivial form of *greeting*, conforming to our "hello."

Must not be confounded with

WOW, which expresses *pain*, *surprise*, *remorse* or *disgust*, according to emphasis or inflection.

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PIT-TEE. The acquirement of this word marks an *advance in brain power* and *cunning*. It is usually pronounced with a guileless look and an expression of gleeful enthusiasm, the hands outstretched confidingly toward some cherished but fragile object of art. If allowed to grasp the article, the infant gazes upon it for one fleeting moment then swiftly dashes it to the floor and as earnestly as before requests something else.

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UNH-UNH. This expression has two distinct significations. (a) If uttered while in charge of mother, grandmother, aunt, nurse or other female denotes a wish to partake of *a repast*, but (b) if in father's care that said parent's thumbs, elbows, knees, coat-buttons or other appurtenances are in too close proximity to certain portions of infant anatomy peculiarly susceptible to such pressure. Young fathers are exhorted to exercise particular watchfulness in this regard, as carelessness, or ignorance, results in bruises, welts, contusions, which, while invisible to masculine eyes, are pronounced by mothers, grandmothers,

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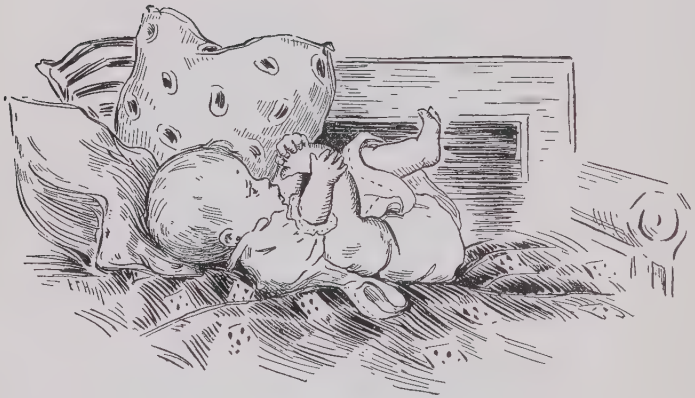

aunts, nurses or other females to be the greatest torture to the tender infant constitution.

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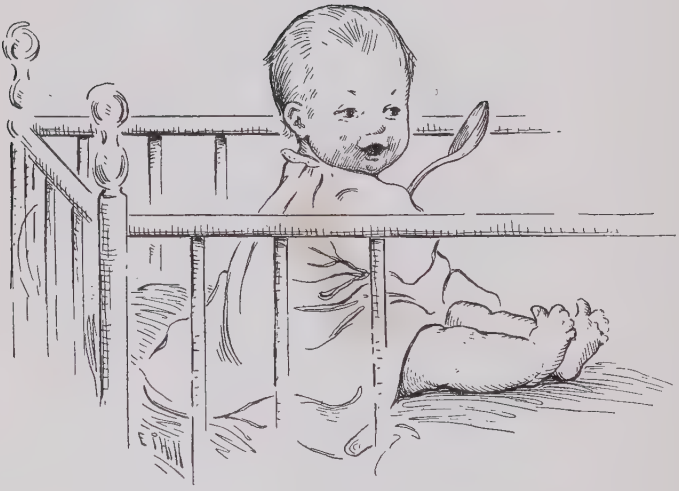

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POO. Does not, as some may suppose, indicate contempt or impatience. Is a request for *spoon* or other article, which, if pounded inside of crib or chair, will produce noise. Is frequently uttered at night, immediately after requests for water and food have been complied with. There is no rule known to fathers for the controlling of the granting or refusing of this demand. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females hold a special sitting of court each time, weighing actuating motives, mitigating circumstances, probable consequences and similar considerations, generally giving verdict in favor of compliance.

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BLUB-BLUB. One of the most striking phrases in the infantile vocabulary. Is accompanied by blowing of small bubbles between lips and is instantaneously followed by violent ejections of the food last partaken of. So far as is known, no father has yet been able to interpret the bubbling phenomenon quickly enough to avoid disaster to clothes, carpets, curtains and furniture within a radius of six feet, but it is hoped that a close study and faithful application of the definitions here set forth will lead to ultimate dexterity in the interpretation of this call. In this connection it may be noted, as an instance of sex superiority, that mothers, grandmothers, aunts,

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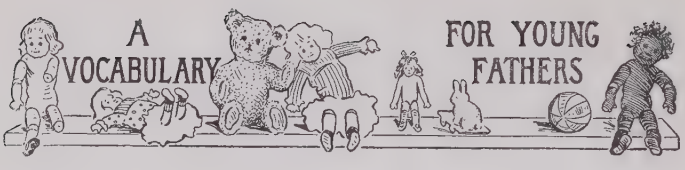
nurses and other females find no difficulty in diverting the aforementioned outpouring into safe channels.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YUM. The first hearing of this word by inexperienced fathers is apt to recall tender sentiments of the days of ardent courtship, but further observation will develop the fact that this word, as an infanticism, is merely an expression of *animal satisfaction*, and ordinarily follows the relinquishing of a semi-yielding substance, as a rubber nipple. This sound resembles the pop of a puckered rose leaf on the forehead.

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BED or BET. Usually uttered in an imperative tone and reiterated, with increasing emphasis, until after a trial of every bed in the house, ringing all the bells, collecting all the belts, and finding none of these successful in reducing the violence of the demand, the *bread box* is accidentally stumbled upon.

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DAM. At the risk of shocking some mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females, this word is included in this aid to paternal understanding, owing to its simplicity, it is caught by the infant mind with astonishing ease and retained and used with marvelous faithfulness. It is generally the first word of unadulterated, every day form used by a child left much in its father's care.

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DAM-PA. An alarming word, whose suspiciousness is only allayed by the pointing of finger or other unequivocal corroboratory action in direction of *grandfather*.

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It is hoped that the exposition of these few words may shed light on the path of some few young fathers with intelligence and application sufficient to grasp their intricacies. A subsequent treatise will discourse of phrase combinations and whole sentences, tracing their derivations to archaic and obsolete roots.

ADDENDA.

Although this Vocabulary has very nearly covered the range of infantile utterances, the young father who has mastered its contents must not suppose himself completely equipped for the proper care of his offspring. There are numberless expressions of countenance, which, to a mere man, seem on the surface to be plain indications of certain mental states, according to the verdict of mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females, are mere heiroglyphics, whose manifest form has no bearing on their spiritual interpretations.

Two courses are open to fathers

who would rank high in domestic training—either a long, appreciative study of the symbols under the tutorship of one of the aforementioned interpreters, or the committing to memory by rote a few of those rules which operate by the law of opposites. Heading this list is the prolonged wail accompanied by contortions of countenance expressive of the extremest anguish of mind or body. As it is difficult for a father to search for pins or the seat of pain in a squirming anatomy, it is a relief to know that neither dandling nor petting is required to relieve this situation. Merely lay aside everything that pertains or is conducive to personal

comfort or pleasure and take the child outdoors for a prolonged outing in directions which he will indicate. The air, the dirt, the birds, the neighbors and even strangers are full of interest to the little chap and a few hours of such diversion, unless hunger intervenes, will soothe him into angelic slumber. There are many minor desyllabized requests, such as fretting, crawling into fireplace, overturning work-basket, etc., which are translated by mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females as "Bay-bay want to go by-by with Daddy."

A smacking of lips indulged in during slumber need not be inter-

preted as imitative of paternal flirtations. Neither need you exert yourself to search the medicine closet—merely lift infant and place in close proximity to mother and you will find that, while the sounds seem to increase for a period, they will soon subside into peaceful-long-drawn breathing.

There is no more appalling ethnicism than complete silence. A calm, serene face, a soul-searching gravity of gaze, unaccompanied by motion of any nature, strike terror to the ordinary understanding. A close comparison of cause and effect, however, will show these to be nothing more than the sign of a full stomach. No attempt has been made to inter-

pret the continuous and monotonous babbling which even mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females admit to be a mere hereditary potentiality, shadowing the talking instinct.

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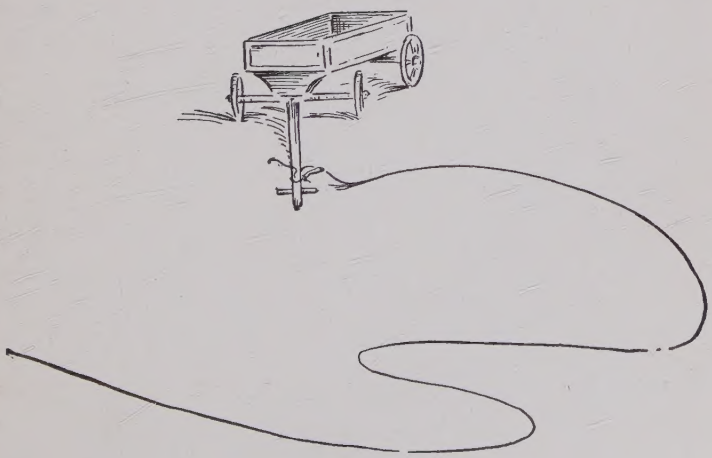

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BOO

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